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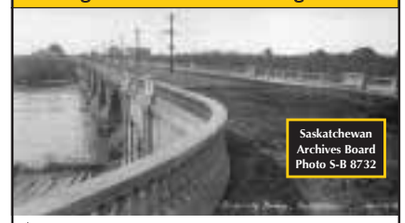

Yoga helps kids with their ABCs

City schools, youth embracing exercise PAGE 2

Assault and flattery

Press, fans greet Justin Bieber as he surrenders to police over alleged attack on limo driver PAGE 4

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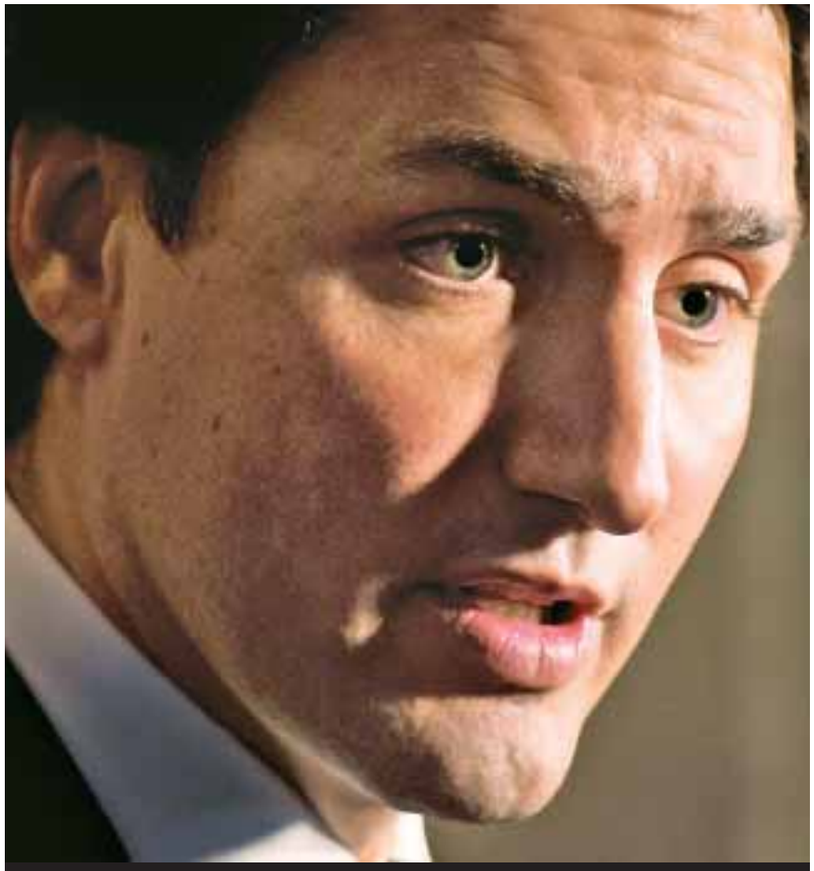

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau speaks about the booting of senators from his party's caucus during an announcement in the House of Commons Wednesday. ADRIAN WYLD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Senators dumped from Grit caucus

Ottawa. 32 members of the upper chamber are now Independents, including a pair from Saskatchewan

Two Saskatchewan senators have become Independents following federal Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau's surprise move on Wednesday to boot all Grit members of the upper chamber from the party's caucus.

"There are no more Liberal senators," Trudeau told a news conference on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, claiming the decision is aimed at reducing partisanship and restoring the Senate's intended role as an independent chamber of sober second thought.

Saskatchewan Sen. Lillian Eva Dyck told Metro that she learned of the move from media reports after missing Wednesday morning's historic caucus meeting.

"It won't affect what I do, because I have priority issues that I work on — for instance, missing and murdered aboriginal women and aboriginal education," Dyck said of the potential ramifications of the shakeup.

Dyck said the decision will mainly affect the way senators operate within the chamber, adding she is unsure about the procedure she now has to follow as an Independent member asking questions during question period.

Although Dyck said she hadn't spoken to other members about joining a new caucus, a group of senators have said they will continue to identify themselves as Liberals — contradicting Trudeau's assertion that they can no longer designate themselves as Grits.

Trudeau, however, subsequently sent a letter to Senate Speaker Noël Kinsella, informing him that the 32 Liberal senators "are Independent."

Premier Brad Wall, who is in favour of abolishing the Senate, said in a statement that Trudeau's move does little to address his concerns about the upper chamber.

"The Senate remains unelected, unaccountable, appointed by the prime minister ... and not worth the $100 million it costs Canadian taxpayers each year," Wall said.

Pana Merchant is the other Saskatchewan Liberal senator who will sit as an Independent.

MARCO VIGLIOTTI/METRO IN REGINA WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

Could this backfire?

Political-science Prof. David McGrane said "the Senate could be a place that could really thwart some of (Trudeau's) legislative agenda" if the Grits manage to win power in 2015.

- "Imagine a situation where you have a united Conservative Senate caucus blocking bills, and then you have a gaggle of (former Liberal) Independent senators that can be trusted (only) on some bills," McGrane said.

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$1.1-million loss

Funding cut sees aboriginal group lay off employees

A Saskatchewan aboriginal group is cutting dozens of staff because it says Ottawa has slashed its funding by $1.1 million.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations told employees Tuesday that 66 of them will be laid off by March 31.

FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde said the group had $875,000 chopped from its budget last fiscal year and this new round of cuts has forced the organization's hand.

Bellegarde said the cuts will diminish the FSIN's ability to analyze legislation and get legal opinions.

He says the organization will also have to reduce its number of vice-chiefs.

In September 2012, the federal government announced it would be capping core funding for regional aboriginal organizations like FSIN at $500,000.

Last year, the federal government also cut discretionary funding to aboriginal groups by 30 per cent.

"You basically weaken the voice of First Nation people across Canada," said Bellegarde.

Bellegarde said the cuts could also give First Nation organizations freedom to take a stronger line against the federal government.

He said funding is often used by the government to retaliate against First Nations organizations that criticize federal policy.

The group will continue to exist, no matter what Ottawa does, he said.

"We have seen the ebb and flow of funding to organizations," he said. "Our FSIN will always be there. Sometimes its shape and form will change and evolve."

THE CANADIAN PRESS/APTN

Local youth benefit from ancient practice — yoga

Dose of inner peace. Health Region hopes to teach yoga to 400 students by March

MORGAN MODJESKI
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Saskatoon is experiencing a youth yoga movement as school officials and parents across the city embrace the physical, mental and spiritual practice.

Samantha Benesh, co-ordinator of the Vinyasa Yoga for Youth program out of One Yoga of Saskatoon, says yoga can be extremely beneficial for young children as it can help with self-awareness and self-regulation.

"Yoga can help any student of any age," Benesh said on Wednesday, noting they've had children as young as three participate.

"The kind of self-awareness that yoga brings to them can really lead them into not only moving their bodies but being more connected with their body."

The Saskatoon Health Region (SHR) has put its support behind students practising poses as part of the Health Promoting Schools program.

Through its Yoga 4 Classrooms incentive, the SHR has enabled 200 students to try yoga, and it expects to have 200 more participate by the end of March.

Candace Bloomquist, an in-motion consultant with the health region, said practising yoga has helped students with everything from communication to problem solving.

"What we've heard back from one of the schools is that students were able to communicate their feelings a little bit more after having done the breathing exercises and focused on what they're feeling and how they're feeling," said Bloomquist.

Melissa Poundmaker, who teaches a Grade 1-2 split at King George School — one of four schools involved in the program — said she uses the practices learned through yoga on a day-to-day basis.

"Sometimes during our story time or our carpet time, I notice they can get a little bit antsy," she said. "So we stop and we do a little bit of stretching, breathing, and all of that helps."

In March, the health region will start compiling data to find out the effectiveness of the Yoga 4 Classrooms incentive.

Students in a Grade 1-2 split at King George School do their best tree pose on Wednesday afternoon. Professional yoga instructors and the Saskatoon Health Region say the ancient practice has a positive impact on students young and old. MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

City puts snow-clearing program on ice

Pat Hyde, director of public works
JACOB MORGAN/METRO

Due to the fluctuating January weather, the City of Saskatoon is suspending its snow-clearing program.

Pat Hyde, director of public works, said at a press conference on Wednesday that the temperatures hovering above and below freezing present a difficult situation for city crews.

"What has happened to the snowpack on the streets is it's gone from a snowpack to hardened ice," said Hyde.

As a result, he said, the graders are having trouble cutting through to the pavement.

He added that the areas scheduled for Thursday and Friday — Lakeridge, Confederation Park, Massey Place and Briarwood — have been rescheduled until the weather evens out and the program is re-engaged.

Until then, Hyde said, the city will identify locations where snow ruts are most severe and deal with them on a street-by-street basis.

"(We need to) make sure the snow ruts don't get ahead of us," he said. "Right now they are three to four, maybe five, inches in some places."

The worst ruts are in core neighbourhoods such as Caswell Hill, City Park and near the university, said Hyde.

While the city is clearing the ruts, Hyde said the plan is to employ the same parking-enforcement signs and relocation towing systems as with the regular snow-maintenance program.

JACOB MORGAN/METRO

Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra boasts 25% revenue increase

'Bursting at the seams.' SSO general manager attributes gains to booming youth interest in classical music

MORGAN MODJESKI
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Residents of the Bridge City seem to have a growing taste for high culture and the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra is reaping the reward.

Mark Turner, general manager of the SSO, said a growing city and a younger audience has contributed to an increase in ticket sales over the last six years, as revenue has seen a 25 per cent increase.

"Young people are really charged up about classical music and not just here, but around the globe," Turner said in a phone interview on Wednesday.

"You look at the Saskatoon Youth Orchestra and it's bursting at the seams," he said. "Kids are excited and I think the reason is because classical music isn't just your Bach and your Beethoven — classical music is music that is good and will never go bad."

While they have seen more young people in the seats at SSO concerts, Turner said he's also seen more involvement from a younger crowd in regards to volunteering and administrative duties.

Peter Sametz, the associate executive director of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, said a healthy orchestra is important to a healthy arts community, as professional musicians are critical to local opera and theatre companies.

"Without that core that's provided through the Saskatoon symphony, the ability of those other institutions to offer diverse programming activity would be compromised," he said.

Turner explained that while the increase in ticket sales is a fiscal benefit for the organization, he feels it also indicates Saskatoon knows the importance of the symphony.

"Ticket sales have gone up every single year, which is excellent and exciting and I think that's a sign that the orchestra plays a big role in the city."

Mozart over Miley

"Kids are excited and I think the reason is because classical music isn't just your Bach and your Beethoven — classical music is music that is good and will never go bad." SSO general manager Mark Turner

Some of the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra's brass section can be seen in the spotlight at the 2013 Prairie Pops Spectacular. Mike Turner, general manager of the SSO, said revenue from ticket sales for the orchestra has jumped 25 per cent in the last six years. TRUDY JANSSENS/PHOTOGRAPHY ONE 2 ONE

Sask. deputy premier urges feds to help end Ukraine crisis

Deputy Premier Ken Krawetz
METRO

Saskatchewan's deputy premier Ken Krawetz urged the federal government Wednesday to strengthen its efforts in helping end the civil unrest in Ukraine.

Violent uprisings have plagued the country since November, as citizens struggle to sever its relationship with Russia and fight for stronger ties with the European Union.

In an open letter addressed to Foreign Minister John Baird, Krawetz encouraged the government to act as a watchdog and ensure that the democratic rights of Ukrainians are protected.

He requested that the government send independent observers to Ukraine "to witness, document and report on court proceedings against protesters, the work of provocateurs who are paid to incite violence and to monitor the injured who arrive in hospitals."

"There has to be the ability for other countries to see what's going on and that has not happened," Krawetz said.

He added that Canada should also increase discussion among provinces about how resources can be used to prevent Ukraine from "potential backsliding to the dark days of economic delay."

Krawetz, who is Ukrainian-Canadian, said the issue is important to Saskatchewanians.

Saskatchewan is home to more than 130,000 people of Ukrainian heritage and more than 300 Ukrainian immigrants have come to the province in the last two years, according to the Saskatchewan government.

Some politicians and NGOs have put forward efforts to expedite visa processing for Ukrainians seeking to escape the country.

Krawetz said these efforts are supported by Saskatchewan's open-door policy.

"We're a province that can be a base for those people who may have to leave," he said. "We as a nation must show that we are concerned and can help the people of Ukraine."

SARAH TAGUIAM/METRO

Bieber turns himself in to police in connection with assault charge

Another run-in with the law. Singer is back in the spotlight, but not for his music

Justin Bieber has been charged in Toronto with assault after police allege he hit a limousine driver several times in the back of the head.

Bieber was charged with one count of assault and is scheduled to appear in court in Toronto on March 10.

Police allege Bieber was one of six people who were picked up by a limousine from a nightclub in the early morning hours of Dec. 30, and there was an altercation while en route to a hotel.

Police officers escorted pop star Justin Bieber through a frenzied throng of media and fans to a Toronto police station Wednesday night where the pop star surrendered in connection with an alleged assault.

Hundreds of fans, spectators and photographers braved the biting cold to greet the 19-year-old singer, who emerged from a black SUV Wednesday night. Fans screamed "Justin," as he was led to the side entrance of Toronto Police Service's 52 Division headquarters.

Bieber's surrender is connected to an alleged assault on a limousine driver who was driving the pop star and his entourage in Toronto in December.

A police spokesperson last month said it was unclear whether the teen heartthrob himself was involved in the alleged attack on Dec. 29, or simply one of his companions. Toronto police have not commented on Bieber's Wednesday night surrender.

"He's done some bad stuff, but I forgive him," said Boubacar Diallo, 12, who waited outside the police station to see the singer. "He just needs to think before he acts."

Others showed up for the possibility of a show.

"He should be charged, he's a wreck," said Peter Esper, 18. "He deserves to be punished. He's a bad name for the country."

Bieber's manager, Scooter Braun, tweeted Wednesday evening asking people to "stop passing judgment."

"Clearly he's in a bad-boy phase," said Bob Thompson, the director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University.

Bad-boy phase

"Not exactly street-cred bad boy. There is kind of a juvenile quality to the whole thing."

Bob Thompson, director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University

Canadian musician Justin Bieber is swarmed by media and police officers as he turns himself in to city police in Toronto on Wednesday night.

NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Thompson said the Stratford-born singer's recent runins with the law, including his arrest in Miami Beach last week and a raid on his California home, reflect Bieber's changing image.

Bieber pleaded not guilty in Florida after Miami police charged him with driving under the influence, resisting arrest and carrying an expired licence. That incident sparked a petition on the White House website calling on the U.S. government to deport Bieber. More than 138,000 people have signed it.

"He is not only threatening the safety of our people, but he is also a terrible influence on our nation's youth," the petition states.

Because the petition has garnered more than 100,000 signatures, the White House must write an official reply.

At this point, Thompson said, it's anyone's guess where Bieber will go from here — whether this is a prelude to more mayhem or whether the troubled singer will turn a corner and clean up his act.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE
WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian journalist in Cairo faces trial for terrorism

Mohamed Fahmy, left, the Egyptian-Canadian journalist being detained in Cairo, was charged Wednesday with being part of a terrorist group.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/CONTRIBUTED

The family of an Egyptian-Canadian journalist imprisoned in Cairo issued an urgent appeal for Ottawa's help Wednesday, as they learned the man had abruptly been charged with being a member of a terrorist group.

Mohamed Fahmy was among 20 employees of satellite news broadcaster Al Jazeera who were charged with several offences in what's believed to be the first time Egypt has referred journalists to trial for terrorism.

Fahmy was charged with using illegal equipment, broadcasting false news that endangered national security and being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, a group Egypt's military-led government has branded a terrorist organization, his family said.

"It's become a very desperate situation," Fahmy's brother Adel told The Canadian Press.

"We are very proud Canadian citizens. We became Canadian citizens because we know that Canada is the most decent country and always protects its people. We need the Canadian government to save my brother."

Mohamed Fahmy and his two colleagues — Australian Peter Greste and Egyptian Baher Mohamed — were taken into custody on Dec. 29 at a hotel room in Cairo where they were working after authorities raided the offices of Al Jazeera English.

Egyptian authorities characterized the arrest as part of a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood, and depicted Al Jazeera as being biased towards former Islamist president Mohammed Morsi — who was ousted by the military in July — and his Muslim Brotherhood-led supporters.

Al Jazeera, which no longer has journalists reporting in Egypt, has denied any bias and decried the latest developments.

"The world knows these allegations against our journalists are absurd, baseless and false," a spokesman said. "This is a challenge to free speech, to the right of journalists to report on all aspects of events, and to the right of people to know what is going on."

A statement from Egypt's prosecutor said the journalists accused Wednesday — eight of whom are said to be in custody — had established a media network that used two suites in a luxury hotel in Cairo as a media centre, supported with cameras, broadcasting equipment and computers.

The statement said they allegedly "manipulated pictures" to create "unreal scenes to give the impression to the outside world that there is a civil war that threatens to bring down the state" and broadcast scenes to aid "the terrorist group in achieving its goals."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadian response

Canadian officials have said they are providing consular services to Fahmy and his family and have raised this case with senior Egyptian officials.

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Ford sued over alleged link to prison assault

Statement of claim.
Ex-boyfriend of Ford's sister says he was beaten in jail to keep him silent about Toronto mayor's 'unsavoury activities'

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford is being sued by his sister's ex-boyfriend, who alleges Ford conspired to have him attacked in jail to prevent his illicit behaviours from becoming public.

Scott MacIntyre alleges in the statement of claim filed Wednesday that the mayor arranged for jail staff to facilitate the beating. Video surveillance in the area had been "inexplicably disabled" before the attack and the guards stationed to watch the area didn't come to his aid, MacIntyre alleges.

MacIntyre went to jail in 2012 after being charged with threatening the mayor, for saying he would expose his "unsavoury activities," MacIntyre says in his statement of claim.

It was there in March 2012 that he was brutally beaten, more than a year before reports on the existence of a video appearing to show the mayor smoking crack cocaine.

"Ford's drug and alcohol abuse, and his association with criminals to facilitate his drug abuse … are long-standing," MacIntyre writes in his statement of claim. "Ford was anxious that these matters should remain undiscovered."

The allegations are "without fact or foundation," Ford's lawyer Dennis Morris said.

MacIntyre alleges Ford conspired with Payman Aboodowleh, who coached high school football with Ford, to have one of their former players, who was also in jail at the time, attack him.

The former player, Aedan Petros, was among various inmates who told MacIntyre to "keep his mouth shut," once he was sent to jail, MacIntyre alleges.

The suit also names Ontario's Ministry of Correctional Services, which is responsible for the province's jails, Aboodowleh and Petros.

MacIntyre is seeking $1 million in damages from all of the defendants, plus $100,000 from each of them for aggravated, punitive and penal damages. He is also seeking another $100,000 from the ministry, who he alleges breached his charter right to life, liberty and security of the person.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto Mayor Rob Ford at a budget debate in Toronto on Wednesday.
ANDREW FRANCIS WALLACE/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The donkey defence? VIA terror-plot suspect goes on anti-gay-marriage tirade

A man accused of plotting an attack on a VIA Rail train took aim at homosexuality in court Wednesday, denouncing Canada's "written-by-humans" Criminal Code because he said it protects gay marriage.

Chiheb Esseghaier, 31, was arrested last April 22 on charges of conspiring to derail a passenger train travelling from New York to Toronto.

Esseghaier, who has refused to seek counsel since no lawyer will represent him based on the Qur'an, made a speech on Canada's legal system.

"The Criminal Code is a book written by humans," Esseghaier said. "We are putting the laws of God behind our back and we are following the laws of humans."

Esseghaier's speech came to a definitive end once he began talking about the Criminal Code protecting gay marriage, which he said did not occur between same-sex animals outside of humans.

"Donkey males marry only donkey females," he said, before Superior Court Judge John McMahon interrupted, leading to a tense moment in court.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Ottawa

Teen pimp found guilty of human trafficking

A 17-year-old girl was found guilty Wednesday of a slew of charges stemming from a teen-pimping ring she orchestrated with two friends in Ottawa in early 2012.

Her guilty charges include human trafficking, procuring for the purpose of prostitution, assault, forcible confinement and uttering threats to cause bodily harm.

JOE LOFARO/METRO IN OTTAWA

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Second offensive Vitaminwater cap found

Bad taste. Albertan finds 'Ponder Retards' written inside lemonade Vitaminwater bottle cap

JEREMY NOLAIS
Metro in Calgary

Coca-Cola is facing heated criticism once again for having the word retard printed on the bottle cap of a Vitaminwater container, only this time the "offensive" term surfaced in Calgary.

Thousands lashed out at the beverage giant in September when Metro first reported that Edmonton-based photographer Blake Loates had unscrewed a Vitaminwater cap to find the words "You Retard" printed on it. Making the matter worse was that Loates' younger sister had been diagnosed with both cerebral palsy and autism.

On Tuesday, Calgary resident Braeden Rossell popped the lid on a lemonade Vitaminwater to find the words "Ponder Retards" written on the cap.

Coca-Cola has maintained the words were printed by a machine as part of a promotion to showcase Canada's multiculturalism by pairing an English word with a French one on each bottle cap. The word "retard" in French implies lateness or a delay. The company maintained Wednesday it had destroyed any of the caps on Vitaminwater bottles yet to be sent after the Loates family lodged a complaint, but spokesperson Shannon Denny said Coca-Cola was always aware more unfortunate word combinations could surface.

The bottle cap on a Vitaminwater beverage container purchased by Calgary resident Braeden Rossell. COURTESY BRAEDEN ROSSELL

I'm with stupid. Scientists find human DNA contains Neanderthal genetics

Next time you call someone a Neanderthal, better look in a mirror. Many of the genes that help determine most people's skin and hair are more Neanderthal than not, according to two new studies that look at the DNA fossils hidden in the modern human genome.

About 50,000 years ago, modern day humans migrated out of Africa north to Europe and East Asia and met up with furrow-browed Neanderthals that had been in the colder climates for more than 100,000 years. Some mated, and then the Neanderthals died off as a species.

Scientists isolated the parts of the modern human genetic blueprint that still contain Neanderthal remnants. Overall, it's barely more than one per cent, said two studies released Wednesday in the journals Nature and Science.

However, in some places, such as the DNA related to the skin, the genetic instructions are as much as 70 per cent Neanderthal and in other places there's virtually nothing from the species that's often portrayed as brutish cavemen.

The difference between where Neanderthal DNA is plentiful and where it's absent may help scientists understand what in our genome "makes humans human," said University of Washington genome scientist Joshua Akey, lead author of the paper in Science.

A reconstructed Neanderthal skull at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Akey said one of the most interesting parts in comparing human and Neanderthal genomes is where we don't see any caveman influence, such as in areas connected to genes that determine speech and communication. This fits with theories that lack of communication skills hurt Neanderthals and speech ability was a distinctly human advantage, he said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Science

Researchers turn ordinary mice cells into stem cells

A simple lab treatment can turn ordinary cells from mice into stem cells, according to a surprising study that hints at a possible new way to grow tissue for treating illnesses like diabetes and Parkinson's disease.

Researchers in Boston and Japan exposed cells from spleens of newborn mice to a more acidic environment than they're used to. In lab tests, that turned them into stem cells, showing enough versatility to produce the tissues of a mouse embryo, for example.

"It's very simple to do. I think you could do this actually in a college lab," said Dr. Charles Vacanti, an author of two papers published online Wednesday by the journal Nature.

Scientists hope that by making stem cells from the patient, they can get around the problem of transplant rejection.

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Will nine be lucky number for Target?

From the double ring to bull's-eye? Despite missing the mark in Canada, the U.S. retailer is still aiming for success, opening nine new stores

A worker installs an outdoor sign at a Target store in Nova Scotia last year. Nine more Target stores are set for Canada this year. ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Target plans on opening nine more stores in Canada this year.

The U.S.-based retailer said Wednesday it will open two locations in Mississauga, Ont., and one store each in Toronto, Ottawa and Barrie, Ont.

Stores will also be added in Edmonton, Victoria, Winnipeg and Candiac, Que.

Five of the locations will be in former Zellers locations, while the others will be newly constructed stores.

By the end of the year, Target said it will have a total of 133 locations in Canada.

The retailer has faced high expansion costs and disappointing sales since its highly anticipated arrival in Canada last year as shoppers complained about near-empty shelves and notably higher prices than at U.S. Target stores.

Last week, the retailer said it would offer some of its Canadian customers a year of free credit monitoring after a massive security breach at its U.S. stores put confidential details into the hands of thieves.

Target emailed customers saying it believed their information may have been taken if they visited U.S. Target stores between Nov. 27 and Dec. 15.

Target said an investigation found the personal information could have included the names, addresses, emails and phone numbers of some Canadians.

Unlike affected U.S. customers, who had payment data from their debit and credit cards taken, the Canadian information is limited to contact information, according to the company.

Target has said the number of Canadians affected is estimated to be "well under" one per cent of the total, which represents less than 700,000 customers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Screenshot wird gespeichert...
TIME ON PHONE
Time spent with your phone for the last 30 days
15 Jan 58m
14 Jan 2h 3m
13 Jan 1h 46m
12 Jan 1h 3m
11 Jan 2h 1m
10 Jan 1h 26m
9 Jan 33m
8 Jan 52m
7 Jan 1h 46m

Use your phone ... to track your phone addiction

This screenshot from Menthal, an app created at the University of Bonn in Germany, shows smartphone-usage figures. Psychologist Christian Montag, who worked on the project, hopes that by measuring how much time people spend on their smartphones the app will help researchers identify and deal with addiction. "This is a live discussion and this will provide data. We are seeking patterns in areas such as tolerance development and withdrawal," he says. CONTRIBUTED/METRO WORLD NEWS

Sears. Struggling retailer cuts more staff

Sears Canada Inc. has announced a round of layoffs for the second time this month, eliminating 624 workers.

The struggling company said Wednesday most of the reductions will be in middle management at Sears department stores, affecting an average of five employees per location, Sears Canada said in a release.

The company also said it will rework its regional and head office structure to reflect the latest changes and to align it with the smaller business.

Two weeks ago Sears Canada said about 1,600 positions would be affected as it moved ahead with plans to shutter its three Canadian call centres and reduce staff at its warehouses.

Sears Canada is trying to reduce costs and improve its overall business as part of a three-year turnaround plan. Last year, the company made a similar round of cuts that has lowered its overall employee count to around 20,000 people.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Angry Birds website hacked following spying allegations

Angry Birds creator Rovio Entertainment Ltd. says the popular game's home pages have been hacked, two days after reports that the personal data of its customers might have been accessed by U.S. and British spy agencies.

Rovio spokeswoman says the hacking lasted a few minutes early Wednesday and that end-user data "was in no risk at any point."

The hacking came after documents leaked by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden suggested that the NSA and Britain's GCHQ had been able to extract information through a host of smartphone apps across the globe, including the Angry Birds game franchise.

Rovio has denied the claims, saying it does not "share data, collaborate or collude" with any spy agencies and that it would re-evaluate third-party advertising networks.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cheers! Cheerios' interracial family back for Super Bowl

Cheerios is bringing back an interracial family to star in its Super Bowl ad.

They were featured in an ad last year that made headlines after it sparked ugly comments online. But the negative remarks were followed by an outpouring of support for the fictional family, made up of a black dad, white mom and their young daughter.

General Mills, which owns Cheerios, said at the time that it cast the actors to reflect the changing U.S. population. Despite the controversy, the Minneapolis-based company continued running the ad for several months as planned.

In the new spot set to debut during the Super Bowl, the father uses individual Cheerios to illustrate each member of the family, explaining to his young daughter that, "Pretty soon, you're going to have a baby brother." The girl looks dismayed at first, but then smiles and adds another Cheerio to the little pile.

"And a puppy," she negotiates. Her father says it's a deal. The ad closes with a shot of the mom, watching from the side, looking alarmed at that development.

A 30-second spot during the Super Bowl costs around $4 million US this year. A spokesman for General Mills said the ad is set to air during the first unscheduled time out during the game Sunday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

National skills training

Feds, provinces face off over Canada Job Grant

The provinces and territories are firmly resisting a contentious federal skills training proposal, saying they want to see more flexibility before a deal can be reached over the much-touted Canada Job Grant.

They're presenting the federal Tories with an "alternative" proposition that would provide more flexibility to the provinces in how the proposed program would be funded, as well as how small businesses could participate, said Brad Duguid, Ontario's minister of training, colleges and universities.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Growlers

Nova Scotians can now get their beer to go at brew pubs

People in Nova Scotia can now buy beer made in-house at brew pubs to take home. Beer is allowed to be sold in sealed 1.8- to two-litre bottles, known as growlers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

2014 prediction

Auto sales to lightly step on brakes: BMO

Bank of Montreal expects Canadian auto sales to remain strong into 2014, following last year's record levels. A BMO economist predicts sales will slide marginally to 1.71 million units this year from 1.78 million in 2013. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR
89.46¢ (-0.18¢)

Natural gas: $5.46 US (+$0.57)
Dow Jones: 15,738.79 (-189.77)

TSX 13,643.22 (-44.44)

OIL $97.36 US (-$0.05)

GOLD $1,262.20 US (+$11.40)

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